

Lava
Lane

Nathalia
Crane

If the first book of the Brooklyn poetess sent a gasp of wonder and delight through America and England, what now of her second book? It shows even greater marvels of insight—like a seer's—even higher gifts of imagination, and even more "lustrous phraseology."

There is the abundance of life, the alertness to experience, the visualization, the robust though poetic savoring of every incident, whether ordinary or extraordinary, the "acute psychology," the "exquisite irony, with pert nose in air and twinkle in the eye."

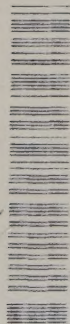
Dr. James B. Cousins, President of the International School of Human Culture, says of Nathalia Crane (what hundreds of others have said in different words) that "her poems make their bid for recognition entirely on their own merits," and one should forget in appraising them that "they are the work of a ten-year-old girl. . . . There is something in some of her lines that has the touch of revelation. . . . If this high level of inner experience will remain with Nathalia, then poetry is destined to something far beyond its previous achievements."

N. Y. Evening Post—"Here is a literary phenomenon of the first order—nothing short of it. She has written poems with the 'spinal thrill' in them, exquisite things with lilting lines and rippling rhymes which Swinburne might not have been ashamed to own."

Louis Untermeyer, the poet, "has been speaking enthusiastically to everybody about Nathalia." Some of her poetry, he says, "simply bowls me over."

It was Gilbert Watson, the eminent English novelist and poet, who introduced Nathalia's work to the English public.

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LAVA LANE

AND OTHER POEMS

NATHALIA CRANE was born in New York City on August 11, 1913. She began to write poetry when she was not quite nine years old, and, as Nunnally Johnson tells in his foreword to her book, *The Janitor's Boy and Other Poems*, she sent some of her poetry to a newspaper when she was nine and a third years old. It was accepted. And so has any verse been that she has sent to newspapers and magazines after that, though for a long time the editors did not know that this poetry which they were accepting and paying for was the work of a mere child.

Editorial in N. Y. Telegram and Mail—"There is nothing in the poems themselves to suggest that the simplicity is assumed, because it is obviously perfectly sincere. It has been simply another case of the young Alexander Pope, who lisped in numbers for the numbers came. The modernists will be pained to find that she is not of their number. She also is unlike them in this—she has a gift of humor."

Kenelm Digby in Literary Review—"Nathalia Crane is distinctly our choice among poets of the younger generation. She seems to have a remarkably mature technique."

N. Y. Telegram—"In her poems you'll find 'three in one'—humor, pathos, genius."

Editorial in N. Y. Sun—"Wordsworth would doubtless have rejoiced exceedingly in a ten-year-old poet like Nathalia Crane of Brooklyn."

By the same author

THE JANITOR'S BOY

And Other Poems

LAVA LANE

AND OTHER POEMS

by

Nathalia Crane



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TO
MY MOTHER

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CHARTLESS

LAVA LANE

A starry ember of the skies, a friction-tortured
zone

Fell from a heavenly fireplace to orbit of its own.

The seasons soothed each cicatrix as 'round the
sun it whirled,

Contented as a cinder foreordained to be a world.

The protoplasm double-timed, the aeons ran like
rain,

Up went a sultry curtain on the stage of Lava
Lane.

A summer incantation tied the shimmers to the
trees,

The peris glimpsed the splendors of the painted
ferneries,

A flower flamed, a parrot screamed, night spread
her peacock tail,

And beauty tripped the platform of that lilac-
tinted vale.

It was the first performance and the Moon a
spotlight threw,

Each rosebud was a nocturne clad in nothing
more than dew.

A prompter squatted on a crag—his rapture
ranked his skill,
The cue lines spurted as cascades in eagerness to
spill.

The cliffside caverns were the stalls, the prim-
itives were there,
The snowdrop and the dinosaur, the crocus and
the bear,

The pythons long as parasangs, the robust but-
terflies—
So strong that twixt their wings they bore great
vats of sweet supplies.

'Twas all upon a kinder scale, more colorful and
vast.
The fountains jetted slowly in the faith that they
would last.

Now he who spoils a pastoral would tantalize a
nun;
There came to reign in Lava Lane the Prophet
Number One.

He ripped apart the border props, he diapered
the rose,
The lead he made a mummy of in woolens to her
toes.

He turned the back-drops inside out for that
persuasive play,
But while he scanned a make-up box the
prompter stole away.

The script was in an arbor hid—the vines began
to swell,
Conditioned by a secret not a vineyard dared to
tell.

It was a tense conspiracy and Lava Lane stood
mute
Depending on a partizan—the silence of the
fruit.

Each mother marked her armful with a pucker of
the lip,
An early reservation lest a wonder stutter drip.

The tiger tiptoed down the years, the monkey
bit his tongue,
The secret rested sweetly where the purple
grapes were hung.

And yet that prophet catechized the canyons of
the mole,
The babies' cribs were rumped and he raked the
adder's hole.

He never found that manuscript but dying left
a son
Instructed in the palsies of the Prophet Number
One.

Oh, still we dream deliverance, a lilac-tinted fane,
A playhouse where the billboards dare to picture
Lava Lane.

We hear an ancient overture, the night bird's
violin,
A curtain rises slowly on the verities of Minn,

The earthiness and ecstasy, the heritage benign,
The pastoral we trusted to the flagons of the
vine.

THE FIRST 'ARTISTS

In Lava Lane were artists
Who swung the chalk with glee.
The pool proclaimed with circle,
The down-stroke was the tree.

On canvas of the caverns
With fundamental mirth
They outlawed Eva's girdle,
Drew Adam as at birth.

No background jammed a vision,
No border awed a soul,
They overran the pushpins
To draw the fishing pole.

They posed the lava bubbles,
The baby's unborn tooth,
Diameters were goaded
Until the chalk was truth.

The tints of wild contentment
Were ever in their sighs,
They fled not from the orgies
When mothers shut their eyes.

Those galleries no longer
Connive against the blue,
An angel mined the dugouts
Because they were too true.

And yet some sultry morning
May show where art still bides—
An urchin at a billboard
And chalking up both sides.

BABEL

We loved your lime-stained lecturns—
The trestles leaping high,
The slogan of your derricks
To underpin the sky.

A planet held the plumb-line
And fooled us from afar,
But we went marching upward—
The perpendicular.

We still resent the moment
We heard a buttress gape,
The scaling ladders calling
To hasten our escape.

Your towers turned to torrents,
Your walls waved like a fan.
We threw away the sheepskins
And for the slide poles ran.

The moon is meditative,
Morose the Milky Way
To see the trestles crumpled,
The derricks in decay.

And yet the horizontal
Bequeatheth naught of shame,
For other campaniles
We chant the builders' fame.

With grace we give to Gizeh
Another thousand tiers;
Who tilts the Wall of China
May make up our arrears.

But we, the chastened, seek not
To overcrowd the skies;
We kneel beside the fires
And watch the halos rise.

THE CANTILEVER BAR

Beside the red Euphrates,
Beside the reedy Nile,
We feasted with the mallet
And entertained the file.

The bulls of Nin we chiseled,
Oh, Bel and Balthazar,
But for the Theban pylons
The cantilever bar.

We gave the Sphynx a status,
Raised Pharos from our skids,
And with the nudes of Nubia
We posed the Pyramids.

We milked the buxom quarries
Of porphery and verd;
The marble saw us beckon,
Disrobed without a word.

'Twas maul and pawl and cable,
A kiss each parasang,
The drivers' whips caressing
The cantilever gang.

The thimble nudged the needle,
No more there is to tell,
But clean our gabardines are—
We slew not Jezebel.

We never mixed the mortar,
We never laid that wall,
Nor were we even present
To catalogue her fall.

But had we seen her totter,
That lovely Sidon witch,
We would have piled our cloutings
In any city ditch.

And had she landed lightly,
Oh, Bel and Balthazar,
Fame would have made her bookmark
The cantilever bar.

THE SLEEP WALKERS

You who read the rituals
Scrawled about the rose,
This concerns a journey
'Twixt a camel's toes.

In an old oasis
Basined like a shell
There abode a red bloom—
Rajah of the Well.

Round his porphery frontiers
Yellow billows ran,
Overhead a vapor
Becked the caravan.

'Cross those saffron sand dunes
'Twixt a camel's toes
Came an alien seedling,
Grew another rose,

Quite unlike the first one,
Pallid as the dew,
And a desert teasel
Stood between the two.

Love that nudged the by-laws,
Made the statues lean,
Eyed that arid teasel
Standing in between.

Sent the dusk—a dervish
Waving regnant arms;
All the mangroves nodded,
Drowsy were the palms.

From an ancient nullah
With authority
Was dispensed the darkness,
Censorless and free.

Fountains juiced with poppy
Sprayed on every hand;
Fell the teasel's girdle
Clinking to the sand.

Prayed that ardent alien
As the flower prays:
Save me from the blemish—
Heartbreak of the vase.

Pondered she o'er cradles
?Twixt the camel's toes;
Swooned and by a well-spring
Saw that other rose.

As the sleeper walketh
Chartless but serene,
So she flanked the teasel
Lolling in between.

At that very hour,
 Orienting chance,
Went a well-side rajah
 Straying down a trance,

Far beyond the candles
 Of the catechists,
Treading to a tangent—
 Two somnambulists,

In that old oasis
 Never more forlorn,
Passing on the rosebud,
 Handing down the thorn,

Giving breath to heaven
 For the new ones' need,
Tutoring the leafage,
 Lanterning the weed,

Halting all the aeons
 O'er a flower rite,
Resurrecting Eden
 As it was at night.

You who read the rituals
 Scrawled about the rose—
Love that lacks the howdah
 Takes a camel's toes.

MINN

Minn, the first of old men,
Dawn upon his knee,
Tells of his adventures
With solemnity.

Loitering as a toddler
Where the lava flows,
Dipped a little fat leg,
Burned off all his toes.

Bordering on seven—
Bow and arrow wise—
Drew upon a wildcat,
Nearly lost his eyes.

As a youth he dawdled
Where the fishers dwell,
Learned about the globules
Hidden in a shell,

Got himself an oyster,
Pillaged for the pearl.
From a skein of seaweed
Rose a water-girl,

Seized that lustrous globule,
Glided from his side,
Mocked him from a billow:
“Wait another tide.”

Minn, the first of old men,
Grieveth o'er the tricks
Played by lava puddles,
Claws the wildcat flicks,

Warns against the mermaids—
Dawn upon his knee—
Talks about disaster
With solemnity.

SPORT

CLEOPATRA

The darlings of the doorstep have no rights
Tho' rigged with names that old resorts would
cheer;

They see the tawny rosebud tread the nights,
And go unclocked—a garden Guinevere.

Believing in the butter and the bread,
They peer beyond the frontiers of a frown;
Betimes they list to angels deeply read,
Then turn those vellumed versions upside
down.

They long to trade a flathouse for a Troy,
The foreground of a doorstep for a fen;
They would—but their tough mothers take a joy
In saying: "Cleopatra's only ten."

Cleopatra—Cleopatra,
Do you see the Pharos Light?
Do you think that Caesar's galley
Will make the Nile tonight?

Cleopatra—Cleopatra,
You were always mother's hope;
There's a galley in the bathroom—
And a little piece of soap.

THE TELLTALE

The janitor's boy bought a catalogue boat,
'Twas ballasted down to the Plim.
He offered to me half the cabin quite free
If I would go cruising with him.

His eyes, they were flecked like the mackerel
skies,
His hair was a beautiful red.
No gay brigantine could so sweetly careen
As that catalogue boat, so he said.

Its anchor was ebony, even the flukes,
The ship's bell was made of cut glass;
From top gallant clew to where main royal grew
The hamper was all done in brass.

The port and the starboard lights, both of them
bronze,
The galley stove modeled in gold,
The wheel and the heel of the bowsprit and keel
Were rosewood, and so was the hold.

Our tackle was ivory right from the tusk,
The topping lifts heavy with silk,
And all of the cleats, with the reef points and
sheets,
Were whiter than Paradise milk.

Each runway was ribboned with cutlasses grim,
The gats of the broadsides were veiled,
No port captain knew of the fathoms we drew
Because we were sunk 'ere we sailed.

The log showed a clearing date one Monday
morn,
The powder in Number Two hold,
We were rigged as the jack but alas, and alack,
That telltale ship's bell up and told.

A renegade gong full of cut-glass deceit,
Not daring to take to the sea,
Went blabbing till blue on an innocent crew—
The janitor's laddie and me.

The householders scuttled our catalogue boat—
Oh, God will forgive them some day.
A billow they buttonholed, frothy and cold,
And sank it ten feet in the bay.

We watched from a coastline and dimmed as we
gazed,
We knelt when it started to drown.
The bowsprit did cant with a heavenly slant,
The ensign was all upside down.

But sometimes the sorrow begetteth the joy;
A clamor arose from a swell,
The causer of woe was just going below—
That timorous telltale the bell.

SADNESS

Oh, Mr. Jackson swept the court,
And he said to me: "It's very good sport,
"But I don't like the children pert
"To play around on my beautiful dirt.

"And we've got to keep things fairly so,
"Or the flowers in the court won't ever grow."
Then he gave a frown and rubbed his nose,
And pointed at footprints around a rose.

We were all in the court; he called our names.
There were games he said, and games and
 games—
But it wasn't a game to be so pert
And play around on his beautiful dirt.

Then he took his broom and swept some more,
He swept the dirt as you sweep the floor,
And whenever a footprint left no doubt,
He spoke the names of us right straight out.

We each one got it and good and plain.
'Twas Marg'ret, Nathalia, Louise Duschane;
'Twas Georgie and Bobbie (as little as he),
And he didn't forget Jack Witherby.

And as we got it we walked away.
We did not play in the court that day.
We felt quite sad and not so pert,
And all on account of the beautiful dirt.

THE SHOE-SHINE SPREE

Once on a time I was wedded
Unto a husband of nine,
Then came his mother and took him
Off for an old sandal shine.

Beautiful dolls—I have plenty—
Clasping them unto my heart;
They look so much like their father
I could forgive him in part.

Yet when I think of that mother
Taking my husband from me,
I feel like raiding the corner—
Ending that shoe-shining spree.

FAME

THE RANKER

There was only one first sergeant
Who ever went to France,
To walk that wintry terrace—
The Zone of the Advance.

He wore no leather leggins,
No Sam Brown belt in Gaul;
He only wore a ribbon
That ranked the China Wall.

We backed him with an ensign
Above the vestibule;
It flapped against a window
Three thousand miles from Toul.

We conned the lists each evening,
The casualties that came;
We blessed the New York papers—
They would not run his name.

And when the ranks were eased,
The sergeant came once more;
He brought me all the belt plates
The foeman ever wore;

He brought me all the buttons
From off the German gray;
The Rhine still weeps for helmets
That mother gave away.

Now when they rise for heroes
A tigress taps her heel;
A cobra in an eyeball
Begins to sway with zeal.

Perchance there was a marshal
Somewhere along the lines;
They may have used a major
To make the countersigns.

We don't deny a colonel,
A captain or a lance—
But only one first sergeant
Who ever went to France.

THE LIARS

We were the castanet units
Nicked in the Zone of Advance,
We were the shameless survivals,
We were the liars from France.

Gunners who tripped o'er the tripods,
Casualties dug from a cave,
Buddies arrayed in the bandage,
Groomed for a grenadier's grave.

We were the prides of the litters
Lacking in only a knell,
Hearing the field station mutter:
"This one will never get well."

Some of us got compensation—
All of the half of a year;
Some of us got observation
Over refusals to cheer.

Still, there are times we are happy
Soothed by this one circumstance—
We can talk Front Line with Black Jack,
We are the liars from France.

THE LOST TRUMPET

It lies in a Brooklyn garret,
A symbol of glory mislaid,
The trumpet that sounded the order—
The Charge of the Light Brigade.

The bugle of Balaklava—
The first of the orisons—
It holdeth the chant of the horses,
The roar of the Russian guns.

It lies in a Brooklyn garret
In glorious truancy there.
But fame needs no framework or easel,
Not even a Trafalgar Square.

A CHINESE PRINCE

Of all the shops I fancy there's a Chinese one I
know
That sells the broidered slipper with the dragon
on the toe.

And I was never dreaming of a prince when I
strayed in,
But there he was upon a rug, his name was Tantu
Min.

His mother had him gerbed in silk, the rice was
on the floor.
He rose, and Buddha never did a thing like that
before.

He rose—that baby pagan, just beyond the belly
band,
And balanced on a tipsy heel to show a god can
stand.

He waved an oriental fan for me to go his way;
He handed me a box of tea and sweetly said:
“No pay.”

Oh, Tantu Min is very rich, a porcelain bank he
owns,
The priceless colored lanterns and the idols made
of bones,

A censer ribboning a cloud, pagodas and the like,
The strings of golden gongs that chime when
anyone doth strike,

The junks refitting on the screens while teapot
cargos grow—
Those little brodered slippers with the dragon
on the toe.

If Tantu Min but gets the chance to reach to
top shelf height,
I know he'll turn unto that road where Buddha
swung the light.

But Tantu Min when he goes forth to seek the
perfect way,
He must not give to every maid some tea and
say: "No pay."

For if he does, Alas! Alack! Oh, misery and
woe!
He'd best beware of dragons with a slipper on
each toe.

SAINTS AND REFORMERS

THE FIRST REFORMER

It was a primal twilight tense,
Heat swathed the steaming downs,
When suddenly a flower cried:
"Oh, let's take off our gowns."

No arrogance of modesty—
The time was all too hot;
The sap was pouring from the trees,
The pools began to clot.

A passionate poinsettia stripped
Herself of sarcenet green,
A lily shook her sindon off,
A rose her gabardine,

The honeysuckle cast her sheath,
Strove hard to hide a mole,
The poppy ripped her chemisette
And screamed: "I have a soul."

Across the downs a hummingbird
Came dipping through the bowers,
He pivoted on emptiness
To scrutinize the flowers.

But as he paused to clarify
Amazing visionings,
The perfumes drew him down unto
The loveliest of things.

Bewildered the poinsettia blushed
And grabbed a bit of grass,
The honeysuckle held her breath,
The poppy sighed, "Alas."

The roses called him renegade,
The lilies shut their eyes;
Down rushed that ruby-throated wretch—
A sultan from the skies.

He wooed the daunted odalisques,
He kissed each downcast nude,
He whispered that an angel's robe
Was merely attitude.

He sang of love's own liveries,
Of sunburn, tan and verve,
Of little Nordic freckles posed
To punctuate a curve.

He begged them not to gown again,
Caressed away their shame.
He was the first reformer crowned
With accidental fame.

SUNDAY MORNING

God, on a Sunday morning,
Sits in his old armchair
Comforting May Madonna—
Slip-heel who fell the stair.

God, on a Sunday morning,
Rabble around his knee,
Counting the Yiddish babies,
Jouncing the Ebony,

Driving the Nordic cross-eyed
Over the bark-skinned bow,
Telling a saffron silly
Something she yearned to know.

Teaching the Chinese cherubs
Little slow-motion jigs,
Cannibal babes to nibble
Nothing but sugared figs,

Waving the popcorn scepter,
Tossing the tamarind,
Hiding his bags of thunder
Under the rain and wind.

God, on a Sunday morning,
Reaching the dotage stage,
Tearing up all the blacklists—
Making the adults rage.

THE MAKING OF A SAINT

She died in a disarrayed garret
In a vacuous sort of a house.
The lords of the rafters were sorry—
The spider, the moth, and the mouse.

They felt that a burden was on them.
Surmising the needs of a soul,
In conclave they swore to her virtues
And crisscrossed a character scroll.

The spider concocted a halo,
It floated a flat balloon;
The moth made the sign of the pinions
That opened the first cocoon;

The mouse did a modesty duty,
He loosened the strings of her shoes,
For a saint must go barefoot to Zion
Or how could the angels enthuse?

They bowed to the yoke of the legend,
The spider, the moth and the mouse—
They were sending a real one to Heaven
And out of their very own house.

Now garbing a saint for a survey
Entitles the garrets and slums
To the right of the line with the colors,
To act as an escort with drums,

To call upon Minn for the mantles
Prescribed for a walled-in town,
To ask for an issue of ermine
To broider a new renown.

So the moth and the mouse and the spider,
Discarding their old restraint,
Went forth in the raiment awarded,
And Heaven accepted their saint.

THE READER

An Idyl

I am an ancient lady
Cross-legged upon a dais,
Reading of Cleopatra,
Lesbia, Phryne and Thais.

I am sedate in measure,
Old enough not to regret,
Licking a sugared almond,
Mincing a mild cigarette.

Often I pause to ponder—
Goodness, who's shaking the dais?
Surely not Cleopatra,
Lesbia, Phryne or Thais.

THE EDICT

Write, said the editor unto the saint,
Something all dripping with paradise paint,
Something to jazzle and dazzle and please,
Something of kneeling and beautiful knees.

You write the story and I'll write the head,
Margin to margin the copy we'll spread—
Never a blue pencil fussing a sheet—
We'll make a story to sling at the street.

Load it with red-headed peppers and thyme,
Seek not to cincture an innocent rhyme.
Touch all your visions with life's accolade,
Only in telling, oh, be not afraid.

Sing of a Jezabel flung from a tower,
Sing of a Lesbia looting a flower,
Sing of a Sappho and detail each thrall,
Finally Phryne who walked on them all.

Make it as coarse as a cobblestone fight,
Make it as sweet as an old man's delight,
Put in the pallor and strawberry stain
So they will read it—and read it again.

THE HANGMAN'S BOY

Drawn from the silt of the ages,
Blastoderm girthed to destroy,
Turning the least of the laddies
Into a hangman's boy.

Slime from the first of the marshes,
Aching for formative role,
Rose and invaded a vestal,
Tainting an unborn soul.

Tiptoeing down from the primal,
Back of the date lines of Minn,
Gloating from Eden to Pottsville
Over an infant's sin.

Keeping its calendars secret,
Changing its visage and gear,
Now as a prince boy or Pomroy,
Cretin or Cavalier.

Making a half-wit a mother,
Making a moron a sire;
Placarding heirs to the portals—
Fruitage of love's desire.

Drawn from the silt of the ages,
Older than Odin or Troy—
Turning a Pottsville juvenile
Into a hangman's boy.

HONORABLE MENTION



THE WARMING PAN

Abishag

When age had David stricken
They brought to him a maid,
And there's no use denying
That she was all afraid.

They chose her for her beauty—
A Shunammite and dark—
To carry on a custom
Much older than the Ark.

'Twas thought the king was freezing—
Or so the story ran—
And thus was picked that damsel
To be a warming pan.

They robed her as a princess,
She wore a diadem;
They led her to that chamber
In old Jerusalem.

* * * * *

The prophet got a mention
For work at Ajalon;
The Queen of Sheba headlined
Her thoughts of Solomon.

Whene'er the scribes are busy
They barely give the name,
But Abishag of Shunem
Is certain of her fame.

DIANA OF THE GARDEN

I was your Saint-Gaudens goddess,
High o'er the tower stair,
Topping the dawn's campanile—
Dian' of Mad'son Square.

Out of a Roman arena
Rigged I this later fane,
Fitted my rites to a people,
Posed as a weather-vane.

Now comes your turbaned appraiser,
Bent on a barracoon,
Over the glade where Diana
Drew on the three-ringed moon,

Marking the walls of my midways—
Not with love's alphabet—
Scorning my bow and my arrow,
Lack of a pantalet.

Even a goddess of copper
Cools from the hints below,
Seeing the scaffolds creep upward,
Hearing the girders go.

Even a goddess may weary,
Turn to a students' lair,
Leaving Silenus to offer
Farewells to Mad'son Square,

Leaving a crony the duties
Due to the Garden's walls,
And an old-fashioned libation—
Loosed when the tower falls.

THE RENEGADE

John Paul Jones

Oh, London Town the screen goes down—behold
a renegade—

I'd sell for you the hosen blue from off the
Boston maid.

The wonder of the thunder when your gilded
busses roll,

The beauty and the duty when the Guards go out
to stroll.

The Moon comes over Tower Hill so tenderly
and sweet,

The Night Watch trim the candles dim in Hen-
rietta Street.

I waste the dark in weeping all because we tipped
the tea;

To drop a link and hear it clink may please a
colony.

But I would sell the Old South just to cross a
Cheapside sill,

To lay me down a half a crown and feel the
fainter's thrill.

The parrot soaks his biscuit and the squirrel bites
his heir;
A wretch who sells a blue print sketch goes on to
signal flare.

And so I offer Bunker Hill, the lanes of Lexington,
That gala day down Yorktown way, you spent to
stack the gun.

A traitoress must ever hold herself within her
gown
Nor give too much into the clutch of even London Town.

The hunter needs a coaxer when he shies the
highest rail,
The tags upon our battle flags would turn a
guinea pale.

And so I start with little things to make a sliding
rate—
There's Molly with the gun swab, and the field
piece added weight.

The halls of fame declare she had a tot or two of
gin,
The reason why they do deny she was a heroine.

The sword of Gen'ral Washington, displayed to
good King George.
A cracked old bell in Philadel—the lists of Valley
Forge.

The wonder of the thunder that the Bon Homme
Richard flung,
The beauty and the duty when the grappling
irons clung.

I offer that same Indiaman that wallowed to the
beams;
You blew our ports to open courts—we fired
from the seams.

I offer that stained quarter-deck the Hall of
Fame doth shun,
And now I'll put the captain up and let the
prices run.

He knew that we were going down, the catheads
were immersed,
The starboard guns had turned to nuns, the lower
tier had burst.

He answered when Serapis hailed upon that
torrid night:
“We're casting surplus cannon, Sir, we've just
begun to fight.”

The battle lanterns walk the deck, the broadsides
hush the groans—
I place a gaud to top a hoard—the nerve of John
Paul Jones.

THE PLEDGE

These are the words of your Judiths
And Miriams singing at eve:
"Behold, we are sending levies
To hearten the ranks and relieve.

" 'Twas only the sign you waited
From the crone to the ten-year maid.
We give it—a battle order—
And it's fight to the last brigade.

"We went to the wells in sorrow
But we were permitted to draw
The gloss for the golden guidons
And the grip of the lion's claw.

"From David to Disraeli—
From the Bernhardt to Deluge dove,
We stood by the wells of Zion
To draw for the ones we love.

" 'Twas Sarah, Rebekah, and Rachel,
Or Deborah, lifting the veil,
And once came a Shushan Lily—
The daughter of Abihail.

"Our right is rehearsing visions,
Our left rests on old Sinai Hill,
The centre—a harp and tambour,
A crayon, a chisel, a quill."

The wounded go back to colors,
The sick are returned to the file,
Old war maps revert to wadding—
The new to be scaled to the mile.

It's worth the cries from the litters,
It's worth all the standards and guns,
Judith and Miriam pledging
New legions, their own unborn sons.

PLUMES

THE PLAYBOX

To the *Trinket*

The toys of a Tutankhamen
Are under the king's high chair;
The queen hath her doll-house in order
With all of the miniatures there.

But sometimes they sigh for the splendors—
The strays of the playbox hoard,
The light of a Nightingale lantern,
The glimmer of Arthur's sword,

The bugle of Balaklava,
The pipes in the Havelock van,
The faith of a gearless Godiva,
The ending to Kubla Khan.

Tho' lost in the dominant seventh
The hunters are down on their knees;
They are after the strays of the playbox,
For Luxor had nothing like these.

LOVE LANE

In old Love Lane on Brooklyn Heights
There's an ebony bob from Arabian Nights;
She sings each eve of the Tom Moore rose—
And the neighbors shut off their radios.

The people who pass through Henry Street,
They presently go with lagging feet,
For in old Love Lane a cantatrice shade
Is taking the trills of Adelaide.

Shaking the sistrum—a blackberry bob,
Dulcing the treble and daring the sob;
Never a wonder that listeners perch
On the mansion steps near Plymouth Church.

They hear the birds by a waterfall,
They see the rose that was last of all;
The dim garages grow less profane,
For something with pinions is down in the lane.

THE PEACOCK FEATHERS

I went forth in the morning,
Down to the ten-cent store,
Found them arranging feathers—
Plumes that the peacock wore.

Found them parading wonders—
Never so great a crime—
Selling the peacock's feathers,
Two for a single dime.

Straight from the stands I drew them,
Even the broken ones,
Cheers from the paper flowers,
Smiles from the pasteboard nuns.

Only five words I uttered—
Thus do the gods prevail—
Walked off with forty feathers,
All of the peacock's tail.

LEDA AND THE LARK

By the pagoda and just as the dusk
Scattered her odors of balsam and musk,

There came a tiger cat stalking a lark
Down in the pastures of Washington Park.

Sunken the head of the pillaging beast,
Staging a foray to flavor a feast.

Trees were a-tremble, the breeze held its breath,
Arcady's acolyte going to death.

Leda was airing a swan just at dark
Down in the pastures of Washington Park.

Shielding her cygnet but faint to the nave,
Hailed she a hilltop for power to save.

Lords of Olympus, oh rise ye and gird,
Leda is calling to help a poor bird.

Grave as gorilla from tropical glade,
Vulcan attended to rally the maid.

Knowing that simple things always prevail
Dropped he his sledge on that tiger cat's tail.

Off to a cavern in Masterpiece Row
Galloped a spasm hallooing with woe,

Arcady's acolyte took to the trees,
Leda sank down on her beautiful knees.

Vulcan, unsandaled, was toeing the sods,
Dreaming a paragraph primped for the gods.

Yet to make certain he dangled a word:
"Maiden, why grieve over one silly bird?"

Leda responded though white to the ear:
"Skylarks and linnets are not worth a tear.

"Fright o'er my peerless pet—that made me
wan;
"Sometimes I wish 'twas a mythical swan."

THE PICTURE BOOK QUEEN

She dwelt in a picture book palace
By a border all printed in red,
In the splendor of primitive candor,
A queen who had never been wed.

Her damsels she tied to her sandals
With promptings and girdles of gelt,
And not till the very last chapter
Could anyone guess what she felt.

Because of her delicate largess
They saw not what might have been seen—
The page from the Porphery Mountains
Who served but a picture book queen.

His eyes were two sapphires but bigger,
His lips bore the sign of the plum,
His mission to straighten a cushion—
To gaze, and forever be dumb.

The summer began oh, so simply,
The minstrels were issued new lutes,
But late in July a squire dozing
Grew spurs on his Cordovan boots.

And presently knights went a-wooing,
The witches were working in shifts,
Betrothals won greetings with leaseholds
And other encouraging gifts.

The fountains were cluttered with philtres—
Oh who could have done such a thing?
The sages dispensed with the ages,
Each scullery girl got a ring.

The weddings were set for a saint's eve,
The Pryor addressed the brigade,
In the distance the Porphery Mountains
Smiled down on that bridal parade.

Her Majesty heard from a tower
That honeymoon multitude cheer.
In the splendor of primitive candor
She waved to each pillion and spear.

The cavalcade slowly departed,
The darkness deleted the vale,
And then came a page with a candle
To tell of the end of the tale.



THE REFUGEE

I shall go back to the sea-shell,
Beginning all over again,
Back to the heart of the garnet,
Back to the butterfly's vein.

There I shall 'scape all the scholars,
Giants who chant of belief;
Pebbles will open their caverns,
Pastures will call from a leaf.

There I will tarry with small things,
Choosing my pin-point domain,
Finding a star in an atom
Carries the heavenly strain.

Willing to worship the little,
Even the specks of the rust,
Counting my trifles as priceless—
Since peace sits as one in the dust.

THE LAW

A peacock on a pedestal
In beauty doth prevail,
Yet if he had a thousand eyes
He could not see his tail.

Fate rules he may not turn to gaze
For e'en the briefest span
Whene'er he spreads in green and gold
His very famous fan.

* * * * *

The rower chained to galley bench
From noontime unto noon,
He never sees his own trireme
From viewpoint of the moon.

The bulkheads like a bandage bind,
The deckbeams heed no sigh,
And only when the galley rolls
The oar ports show the sky.

DESTINY

The wind doth wander up and down
Forever seeking for a crown;
The rose in stillness on a stem
Inherits love's own diadem.

THE WARNING

Oh, when a gleaming motor glides
From out a dusky haze,
Bethink you of the flowers there
Within the tonneau vase.

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THE DISCOVERER

Mystical, sorrowful, stiff and still,
A sparrow stood on a wintry sill.

The night wind laden with icy sleet
Ruffled his feathers and stung his feet,

But his right eye peered through a window pane
And visioned the warmth of a June-time lane.

He saw the lights from a fireplace fall
Over the patterns on somebody's wall.

His heart was thrilled by a paper rose—
He had found at last where the summer goes.

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